

Yadira Gamez, "Review of 'Postcolonial Nations, Islands, and Tourism: Reading Real and Imagined Spaces' by Helen Kapstein (Rowman & Littlefield International)," *Lateral* 8.1 (2019).

<https://doi.org/10.25158/L8.1.18>

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Book Reviews

Issue 8.1 (Spring 2019)

Review of *Postcolonial Nations, Islands, and Tourism: Reading Real and Imagined Spaces* by Helen Kapstein (Rowman & Littlefield International)

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ABSTRACT Helen Kapstein's book *Postcolonial Nations, Islands, and Tourism: Reading Real and Imagined Spaces* positions tourism as a form of colonialism. Specifically, the author lays out the similarities between different forms of modern day tourism and how they reflect colonial practices, with reference to three foundational values: surveillance, control, and consumption. Kapstein's book is a riveting read and is perfect for those interested in post-colonialism, tourism, the creation of real and imagined spaces and desire studies.

Postcolonial Nations, Islands, and Tourism: Reading Real and Imagined Spaces. By Helen Kapstein." London, UK: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2017, 226 pp. (hardcover) ISBN 978-1-78348-640 8. US List: \$120.00. (paperback) ISBN 978-1-78348-646-5 US List: \$39.95

Helen Kapstein's book *Postcolonial Nations, Islands, and Tourism: Reading Real and Imagined Spaces* positions tourism as a form of colonialism. Through various spaces, real and imagined, Kapstein takes the reader on a journey to show how tourism is "a potential practice of nation formation" (xix). Specifically, the author lays out the similarities between different forms of modern day tourism and how they reflect colonial practices. Kapstein notes that tourism and colonialism have three foundational values: surveillance, control, and consumption. After connecting colonialism and tourism through the concept of practice, Kapstein specifies that she is interested in islands and how they are shaped by this relationship. Building on work such as that by Pete Hay, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, and Robert Knox, Kapstein positions her contributions within the field of tourism and island studies, expanding the field by furthering the study of real spaces. Yet, Kapstein also deepens the analysis of imagined spaces in order to show how they can be helpful in finding meaning within real spaces.

Each of the five chapters focuses on a different real or imagined space that Kapstein emphasizes to deepen her analysis and further her overall argument. Chapter 1 "A Literature of Failure: Reading *Foe* and Defoe" focuses on comparing and contrasting Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and J. M. Coetzee's novel that rewrites it, entitled *Foe*. Through these two novels, Kapstein establishes how tourism works and how the tourist creates the boundaries and image of the island. The protagonist of *Robinson Crusoe* can be read as a colonialist disguised as a tourist. Crusoe spends his time in the novel making items without purpose. His constant making severs the meaningful connection between tourism and labor. *Foe* similarly demonstrates the colonialist disguised as tourist but through a noticeable lack of action. *Foe*'s colonialist efforts do not involve as much labor

as they do in *Robinson Crusoe*, but both novels demonstrate how the tourist's visit creates an unstable zone which primes the island's national identity for change. The tourist's demands must be met by the island labor, which in turns impacts how the nation creates its own identity.

In Chapter 2 "On Seeing England for the First Time (Again)" Kapstein demonstrates how imagined spaces can reflect real spaces. The focus of this chapter is Julian Barnes's novel *England England* which, Kapstein argues, takes real events and reimagines them through the tourist gaze. Events seen from the perspective of the tourist gain new life as market relations. In this way, distortion becomes a tradition that turns England into a "ready-made product available for consumption" for tourists (31). For Kapstein, *England England* demonstrates how a space becomes vulnerable to tourism and how its history, romanticized through tradition, can serve to reorient a space for touristic practices. A section of Chapter 2 is focused on Banksy's art installation Dismaland, and its financial success and popularity. This opens the question of whether or not the long lines, rude service, and technical difficulties tourists experienced at Dismaland were poignant criticisms or a case of supply and demand for unique touristic experiences.

Kapstein's third chapter, "A New Kind of Safari: Gunesequera's Sri Lanka" is organized around Romesh Gunesequera's writings including *Reef*, *Heaven's Edge*, and *Noontide Toll*. Kapstein argues that Gunesequera's fictions are used as real histories, which impacts how the Sri Lankan national narrative is created. At the base of Kapstein's analysis is Gunesequera's use of back drop which he either ignores, or selects from and manipulates in his novels; the texts' historical authority is derived from the fact that the author is actually from the country he is writing about.

Chapter 4: "The Rim of Things" and Chapter 5: "Every Native Would Like a Tour" focuses on Kapstein's investigation into Robben Island in South Africa. First a colony for outcasts such as lepers, later a prison, and today a tourist attraction based on this history. Kapstein spends two chapters detailing how tourists have impacted how Robben Island operates and the importance of Robben Island to tourists. Tourists who visit Robben Island are looking for a specific kind of experience and everything from the souvenirs to the lectures given by former wardens produces a flattened-out experience of the island as a purely touristic space.

Kapstein's book is a riveting read and is vital for those interested in the study of post-colonialism, tourism, desire, and the creation of real and imagined spaces. Kapstein keeps theoretical jargon to a minimum which makes the book accessible to a range of readers in the fields with which her book intersects. The introduction, "On Violence and Visuality," orients the reader to these fields with some introductory material before she dives into the content of the study. Specifically, a current state of the field of island studies and its influences is given along with a brief overview of the factors that contribute to making an island. Kapstein's use of various primary sources from art installations to visitor feedback reports is a refreshing reprieve from route literary sources. Overall, this well written book will make a wonderful addition to any scholar's book shelf.

 [Bio](#)

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Yadira Gamez is a first year PhD student in the English Department at Texas A&M University. As a first generation academic, her goal is to be an English professor at a minority serving institution. Gamez's research interest is firmly centered in the intersectionality of gender and race in 20th century

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ISSN 2469-4053